Nayar: Central Kerala

In all possible respects attempts seem to have been made to reduce 361
the intensity of marital ties for the sake of the unity of taravād, 595
village, and kingdom. Good men were men who devoted themselves 613
first to the service of their feudal lords, and second to the welfare of 597
their taravāds. Weak and immoral men were men who became in-
veigled by their wives and their children, so that they tried to make
unnecessary gifts to their wives and neglected their taravāds. An ideal
kāranavan was one who broke off his marital ties in old age and de-
voted his energies solely to his sisters' children. Institutional recogni- [593]
tion of emotional attachments between spouses was reduced to a 595
minimum. If a man by accident died in his wife's house his body was 764
immediately brought home for cremation by his lineage kin. After a
man's death his current wives were permitted to come and view his 613
corpse. They were then ceremonially conducted out from the north
side of the house—the side opposite to that from which the god of
death had come. They must not look back at the house of death and
they might never visit it again. They and their children took no part
in the funeral or the subsequent anniversary rites nor did they observe
death pollution.

In spite of the institutional precautions, undoubtedly some men 595
formed strong emotional attachments to particular wives and their 754
children. The institution of sorcery came into play at this point 613
(Gough, 1958). Among Nayars, sorcery was practiced mainly against 593
affines; it was ineffectual within the lineage. It was believed to be
practiced most by junior members of a taravād against the matrilineal
kin of their kāranavan's wife. The reason was that if he were particu-
larly attached to a wife, the juniors of a kāranavan might fear that he
would transfer to her gifts and cash which belonged legally to his
taravād. They could not make their complaint in law, for the
kāranavan was their legal representative. Instead, they are said to
have secretly engaged low-caste practitioners to recite spells and
make offerings to some minor malevolent deity with the object of
bringing sickness upon the wife or her kin. If they suspected such
evil doing, the members of the wife's taravād might in turn hire a
"good" practitioner of their own who would appeal to some other
deity to return the misfortune to the senders. It is clear that Nayars
did hire "good" practitioners to perform countermagic against af-
fines; whether in fact they hired evil practitioners to perform sorcery
in the first place is uncertain. At all events the institution of sorcery [54]
provided a covert outlet for interpersonal hostilities between affines
which could find no expression in open conflicts between their groups
as a whole. The result of the hostilities was often termination of the [586]

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

separate segments, gave them economic independence and a share in the government, and made them representatives of the lineage as a whole. If the lineage separated into two or more branch property groups, their estates were managed by their senior men after the sthānis had been removed. The whole lineage might thus cohere for a number of generations. When, however, taxes ran low and the political offices became financially weak, the sthānis had a tendency to revert to the property groups from which they came and, as heads of them, to seek independent rule over a portion of the chiefdom or kingdom. Sthānams were thus an integrative device which developed when a ruling lineage was already strong. They could not maintain its strength if the economic basis of its power was removed, nor could they ultimately prevent disputes of the branches for the central office if the lineage became very large.

RELATIONS BETWEEN ARISTOCRATIC LINEAGES

Each office-bearing lineage had as its enangar one or two higher-ranking lineages from the range of those within which its women were wont to draw visiting husbands. Thus village headmen often had their district chiefs as enangar. A district chief's lineage might have the royal lineage, a conquered royal lineage, or a Nambudiri Brahman family as enangar. The Calicut royal lineage had two conquered royal feudatory lineages as enangar, and some other royal lineages had Nambudiri Brahman families. The enangar fulfilled the usual ceremonial obligations at life-crisis rites, and tied the tālis of girls. Unlike those among the retainer Nayars, these enangar obligations were not reciprocal. A district chief's lineage might thus receive enangar services from royals, but would give them to village headmen. Appropriately, the enangar relationship among aristocrats, like the marriage relationship, was thus asymmetrical. Unfortunately I lack information about whether aristocratic enangar, like those of retainers, had the right to bring to trial offenders against the religious laws of caste.

It is clear that hypergamous marriages and asymmetrical enangar relations were adapted to the potential political and ritual mobility of office-bearing lineages and to the fact that at any given time such a lineage might not be able or willing to acknowledge others as its equals in political or ritual rank. In most situations therefore an office-bearing lineage could act as though it formed a separate caste. There were some contexts, however, in which this was not possible. One of these was adoption. If a lineage was obliged to adopt, it had to find some other lineage whose members it was willing to acknowledge as peers. This problem was usually surmounted by adopting from a lin-